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NEW ACQUISITIONS OF SANSKRIT MANUSCRIPTS

By DR. W. NORMAN BROWN

With the acquisition during 1935 of about 1800 Sanskrit and other Indic language manuscripts the University of Pennsylvania increased its total to about 2700 and now has the largest collection of such manuscripts in America. These documents have been purchased with funds contributed by Provost Penniman, Mr. John Gribbel, Dr. C. W. Burr, and the Library through the Colton fund. The securing of these funds has been the work of Dr. Penniman. The collection is kept in the Sanskrit seminar, where it is accessible on request to persons capable of using it; for the University has adopted the policy of permitting scholars from other institutions as well as members of its own body to study and publish from these original materials.

The 1935 additions were mostly obtained in India during the academic year 1934-35, and come chiefly from northern and central India, with a few from western, eastern, and southern India. By far the greater number are written on paper, which during the 15th century became the prevailing material for books in western India and quickly spread over central and northern India; the other manuscripts are on palm-leaf and come from eastern and southern India, where even today paper has not yet completely supplanted it as the surface for writing. With the exception of a few interesting Jain items the manuscripts are Hindu (Brahmanic) in character and exemplify a wide range of Sanskrit literature. Of dated specimens the earliest gives a date equivalent to 1505 A. D.; others range from then down into the 19th century.

Most of the purchases are of entire collections. This method has the great advantage of making funds go further than does the purchasing of selected items from collections. An owner, himself ignorant of the language and contents of manuscripts he has inherited from his ancestors, will usually sell a whole collection more cheaply than he will a selection.

In the latter case the focussing of a purchaser's attention upon individual works makes the owner in his ignorance exaggerate the true value of those works and demand a price out of all reason. In one such instance I was asked as much as four rupees a couplet for a manuscript. Since the work contained about ten thousand couplets, the cost would have been 40,000 rupees (about \$14,500); a fair price would probably have been not more than 200 rupees (about \$72). But the owner had named so large a sum that it was obvious we could never come to an agreement, and I did not even attempt to do business with him but only thanked him for having allowed me to see and examine so valuable an object. The disadvantage of purchasing by an entire collection lies in the fact that every such collection contains material of second value, useful only as illustrations of works already satisfactorily published. In general, the purchase of manuscripts is best negotiated through an Indian, and the less a foreigner, especially an American, appears in the transaction, the more successful it is likely to be. Whenever possible I worked through an agent, sometimes a dealer, who would take a reasonable commission; the ideal arrangement was not to permit even my name to be mentioned. It was most important to pick agents familiar with the manuscript market, who would get for my inspection material which was worth the time and difficulty necessary to complete the purchase.

The 1935 acquisitions are especially strong in the Vedānta (the dominant philosophical system of Hinduism), mediaeval religious law, and grammar. A number of works have been acquired which are not mentioned in Aufrecht's great *Catalogus Catalogorum* of Sanskrit manuscripts. There are many others which are represented in Aufrecht but still lack publication. There are still others in our collection which have been published but need better editing, and our examples may be useful when these works are being given definitive edition.

One of the least worked fields of Indic culture is that of mediaeval religious law. The oldest texts of religious law

have been well explored, but the mediaeval texts have been hardly touched. Although the latter build upon the older, they differ in many respects and amplify, and they are the norm for modern practice. All told our collection contains about 200 manuscripts of mediaeval religious law, covering the many ceremonies of a pious Hindu's life, and in at least a fair number of cases our manuscripts and the texts they illustrate should be valuable in the development of this unexplored and important field. A doctor of philosophy from this University, Dr. Horace I. Poleman, has been working on the mediaeval death and funeral rites, and has in this collection further material for his research.

Among the rare works in the new acquisitions is the *Ganitanamamala* by Haridatta, an astrological work. Another is the *Prayascittaviveka* by Sulapani, a work on the rites of expiation. Still another is the *Smrtikaustubha*, a text of death rites by Anantadeva, who wrote in the first half of the 13th century and was one of the earliest authorities on later Hindu ritual. A curiosity is an anonymous and probably incomplete text in dialectic Hindi on birds as omens, showing rude paintings of sixteen birds, some with onomatopoeic names not appearing in the Hindi dictionaries, and indicating whether these birds are favorable or unfavorable in connection with ten topics, such as starting a journey or entering into a business association. It was possibly a village soothsayer's pocket guide.

The oldest dated manuscript in the new group is of the *Nyayamakaranda* by Anandabodhacarya, an unpublished work on logic, of which three other manuscripts are listed in Aufrecht's catalog. The colophon of our manuscript gives a date equivalent to 1505 A. D., a very old date for paper manuscripts in India except in western India, and indeed old for manuscripts anywhere in India except western India and Nepal. The paper, style of page, and appearance of the manuscript are such as to make the date plausible. But there is a complication in that just below the original colophon is another line of writing, possibly a later addition, giving a date

equivalent to 1605 A. D., just a century later than that of the first dating. Since the manuscript is rare, it becomes worthwhile to decide which date is correct.

Of the score of palm leaf manuscripts from South India, one was purchased last summer in London by Provost Penniman and presented to the collection. It is of a Tamil text entitled Kanda-puranam, dealing with Hindu mythology, a work which this manuscript may at some time be useful for editing.

It is gratifying to be able to state that our entire collection is being cataloged at this time. Without a catalog a manuscript collection is of very little value. In the case of previous accessions of Indic manuscripts, the library at once had cards made for them. It happens that the American Council of Learned Societies has been financing a census of Indic manuscripts in the United States and Canada, and this has been in the hands of Dr. Poleman, who has had the advantage of the facilities of the Library of Congress and that Library's cooperation. It is hoped that when his cataloging of Indic manuscripts in America is completed the final work will be adequately published. Up to this time many of the Sanskrit manuscripts in this country, including one very large collection, were not even listed anywhere and could serve no scholarly purpose. When Dr. Poleman's work is published, all materials will at once become evident to scholars.